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ABSTRACT

The work involved in preparing writing skill specifications that could be used to determine bilingual students' entry into and exit from bilingual programs is described in this paper. The first section of the paper details the steps involved in identifying the critical writing skills required in grades one through six, while the second section discusses techniques for assessing those skills. The final section reviews some of the problems that were encountered in completing the specifications. A copy of a computer printout of data collected from textbooks, a chart depicting the variation that occurs between authorities' designations and textbook presentation of certain skills, and a portion of the complete framework are appended. (FL)

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NABE Pre-Conference Workshop
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ASSESSING ENGLISH LITERACY SKILLS: WRITING

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ASSESSING ENGLISH LITERACY SKILLS: WRITING

A goal of transitional bilingual programs is to provide students with sufficient proficiency in English to function in the monolingual classroom. This paper discusses the steps involved in describing the English writing skills required in grades 1-6, the assessment of those skills, and some of the problems that were encountered in accomplishing the task.

SKILLS IDENTIFICATION

The first task involved identifying the critical writing skills, and the first problems were encountered whtn the literature was reviewed for help:

1. Although there currently is an intense interest in writing, the literature does not now provide adequate information on the specificity or range of critical writing skills. The lists of skills suggested by authorities are usually too brief and the skills themselves are too general, as these are, for example:

   > Uses accepted punctuation and capitalization.
   >
   > Uses accepted form and appropriate language in varying types of written communication (Petty, Petty, Newman, and Skeen, in Squire, 1977, pp. 89-90).

   Even more general is the frequently cited, "Writes effectively."

2. Sometimes a listed "skill" really consists of a skill plus a task or an item description. The following skill statement is typical:

   > Writes a description of a picture of a painting.

   "Writes a description" is the skill; the rest of the statement describes the specific object to be described. However, the

same writing skill is often relisted as a separate skill that is differentiated only by that object to be described--for example, "Writes a description of a person."

3. Skill identification is also hampered by the literature's failure to designate the discourse-type subskills of a skill statement such as "Writes a description," that is, subskills like "Uses sensory terms," "Uses spatial ordering."
4. Finally, some skills proposed in the literature are more than too general; they are vague. This skill sampled from a state competency document (Georgia Department of Education, 1968) is typical:

> Understands that writing is a tool of communication (p. 77).

The Collection of Skills

Despite these problems, many skills were identified during the review of scholarly recommendations and competency lists. Each broad skill, such as "Writes a description," was analyzed to identify its subskills. The collection of skills and subskills was then compared with skills derived from the SWRL data available on language-arts textbook series, and any duplicated skills were deleted. To collect the data, page-by-page task analysis is performed on textbooks to determine the content of the instruction and the manner in which the content is practiced. Computer processing of this data produces lists of content by grade level. Consequently, a large data base describes actual textbook (and therefore classroom) instruction in detail. Page 2 of the handout is a copy of an actual computer printout of the textbook data.

The Critical Skills

The comprehensive list was then screened for essential skills according to three criteria: appearance on state or local competency lists, textbook emphasis, and the nature of a skill as either a prerequisite of skills at a higher grade level or as a subskill of another skill. Skills that met these criteria were retained on the list with the exception of some that were covered by the reading component (such as dictionary skills). The list was consequently reduced to approximately 180 different skills.

GRADE LEVELS

The next step in the project involved assigning appropriate grade levels to the collected skills. Again the literature posed problems:

1. Some language arts authorities do not assign grade levels to skills because they feel that sequencing is the local school district's prerogative.
2. Some authorities designate cuts in sequencing in blocks such as K-3 rather than in grades.
3. Other sources list skills for more than one grade level without noting the criteria that differentiate performance among grade levels. These grade 3, 4, and 5 skills are such an example:

   Grade 3: Writes short stories and/or poetry (p. 54).

   Grade 4: Writes stories and poetry (p. 68).

   Grade 5: Writes stories, plays, and poetry (p. 92).

   (Los Angeles City Schools, 1964)

4. Still other sources sequence skills objectives without presenting

any evidence to validate their ordering, and frequently their sequencing conflicts with textbook sequencing.

The chart on page 3 of the handout displays the grade-level variation that occurs between authorities' designations and textbook presentation. The chart is based on a study by Golub (1971), who analyzed differences between grade-level designations found in language arts books for teachers and the grade levels of instruction in students' textbooks. The chart shows the grade-level consensus found in four books written by eminent language arts scholars, the modal grade level at which four text book series presented each skill, and the grade-level designations suggested by the SWRL textbook data. The SWRL grade level is the one at which most or usually all analyzed textbook series present (or have presented) the skill. This designation may or may not be the modal level; usually it is not.

Considerable grade-level variation is also found across state and local competency lists, as is evident in the chart on page 4 of the handout. This chart illustrates the variation across seven states. Information on these skills was compiled from representative state documents (Lawlor, 1979), which frequently place skills at levels higher than those at which the skills appear in textbook instruction.

Because the grade levels reported in the literature and by the competency lists are inconsistent and often do not parallel the actual level of textbook instruction, the grade levels of the writing skills derive from the SWRL textbook data. These data were also used because the most reliable data available on the classroom activities across the entire country are the textbooks students use. And when students must

function in the English classroom, the actual activities occurring there are the important criteria of success in that classroom. However, when an individual school district is developing its own list of critical skills, the grade levels of the skills, as well as the critical skills themselves, should be determined on the basis of the textbooks and curriculum of that particular district.

THE SKILLS FRAMEWORK

After the grade levels were specified, the skills were organized by categories into a framework of writing skills. The major categories of that framework are Handwriting, Spelling, Mechanics, Language, General Discourse, and Discourse Products. A Discourse Product is defined here as a whole composition, such as a story, an essay, a poem. Composing effective written products requires the use of many skills, or subskills, and these are covered in the General Discourse area. Page 5 of the handout shows a portion of the detailed framework--specific skills listed for subcategories of the General Discourse category.

The framework presents one way to organize writing skills. Other frameworks are possible; however, this one was satisfactory for our purposes. The parenthesized letters in the diagram are code designations by which individual skills are identified. The category letters and the individual skill numbers are combined to give each skill a code.

SKILL SPECIFICATIONS

After the skills were organized into a framework, skill specifications were written to delineate each skill and to ensure its appropriate

assessment. The skill specifications are based on content and task analysis and on textbook instruction. The relevant literature was also referenced in preparing the skill specifications. Samples of complete specifications for specific skills will be passed out later.

Skill Statement

The skill statement appears at the top of the page after its code number. In general, the skill statements are cast in terms used both by many language arts authorities and by competency lists. These skill statements generally must be more precisely defined by further explication before assessments can be devised.

Skill Descriptions

This explication is accomplished by the Skill Description. It notes factors involved in the use of each skill, including other inherent skills and prerequisite knowledge.

Assessments

The Skill Description is followed by the section on assessment. For most skills, three or more sample assessment items were written. However, for the writing samples that assess Discourse Products, only one item was written for each skill because these items are complex and because only one writing sample per skill should be included on an actual assessment instrument. Included in writing-sample specifications are the prompt, the scoring key, and scoring guidelines.

The items that were written are the most appropriate type for the skill to be assessed. Items that require a written response were

frequently provided because they are often the most appropriate assessment type. They were the only type included for Discourse Products because a student's ability to compose a complete written product can only be assessed through an actual composing task. When written-response items were suggested for skills other than Discourse Products, multiple-choice items were also included so that they can be used as substitutes when administering written-response items is not feasible. When multiple-choice items were either as appropriate as or more appropriate than written-response items, only multiple-choice items were prepared.

Item Descriptions

Following the sample assessment items is an item description that provides guidelines for preparing additional assessment items that are precise and appropriate.

PROBLEMS

Many problems that were encountered in writing the skill specifications may be encountered by others who wish to develop their own skill specifications based on their own local curriculum. These problems are in addition to the usual ones of avoiding sexism, ethnic stereotypes, and violence.

One problem was the discrepancy between the simplicity of the skill statement and the complexity of the actual skill. The skill statement frequently named what seemed to be a straightforward skill. However, writing the skill description required close analysis of all factors inherent in the skill and relevant to its assessment, and this close analysis often revealed that the skill was far more complex than its skill statement suggested. Some skills were exposed as so complex that they

should not be assessed. For example, many competency lists include for assessment a handwriting skill, "Writes sentences from dictation." However, content and task analysis revealed that this is no simple handwriting skill. Writing sentences from dictation involves many other skills, such as those of spelling, mechanics, and listening.

We found that some skills can only be assessed in terms of another skill. Distinguishing between proper and common nouns is one such skill. It is assessed by capitalization skills. Identifying most sentence types is covered by assessment of punctuation skills.

Sometimes a skill's complexity wasn't fully realized until assessment items and their descriptions were written. Then the skill description (and often even the items themselves) had to be completely rewritten.

Directions also posed a problem because a single inappropriate or omitted word may mislead students. Specific directions must be painstakingly written so students unquestionably understand what they are to do. Yet the directions must be devoid of technical words, when this restriction is possible.

Care must also be taken that each item assesses only one skill. For example, items assessing ability to construct coordinate subject-noun phrases must not include assessment of the skill of subject-verb agreement.

Written-response items and multiple-choice items pose different problems. Written-response items often appear to be simple to devise, but this simplicity is deceptive. Such items must be carefully developed or they will not elicit the desired response. If, for example, the skill being assessed is the transformation of a declarative sentence into a

question, the item must be devised so that the student does not simply rewrite the sentence in the same word order and add a question mark. Also, any component skill, or subskill, that should be assessed by the item must be explicitly prompted. If, for example, precise language is to be used in composing a written product, the item stimulus must tell students to use "exact words."

Written-response items are also difficult to score, so guidelines for rating responses must be included in the skill specifications. If such rating criteria cannot be devised, this inability suggests that there is a deeper problem with either the skill description or the assessment item.

On the other hand, multiple-choice items are easy to score, but they are usually even more exacting to devise than are the written-response items. Multiple-choice assessment items are particularly difficult to devise for writing because they should require a response that assesses writing ability rather than reading ability. This is an important factor in constructing writing assessment items, but it is frequently ignored.

The reading requirement of some multiple-choice items must also be considered. The amount of reading students must do to select a correct answer should be as limited as possible; however, this reading requirement sometimes cannot be lowered and still have the item assess the skill. Also the reading vocabulary used in the items must be limited to those words that are on controlled vocabulary lists for each grade level. Writing a good primary-level item with only those words available on primary reading lists is challenging.

The construction of distractor choices for multiple-choice items also poses development problems. Distractors used in the sample items and described in the item descriptions should be designed and written so that they serve diagnostic purposes, and this diagnostic information should be discussed in the item descriptions. Futhermore, distractor choices must be carefully screened so that they are appropriate for the grade level of the skill being assessed; for example, although the letter f is an appropriate distractor in items for spelling ph when it is assessed at grade 5, ph is not an appropriate distractor for f when it is assessed at grade 1.

Developing a language skills framework is a time consuming task. As should be evident by now, writing skill specifications is even more time-consuming. Yet such specifications must be written to determine what is to be done and to validate what has been done. The all-too-frequent approach consists of reading the skill statement and then whipping off a few items with a correct answer and several distractors without regard to isolating a single skill for assessment, to considering the mode being assessed, to guaranteeing the precision of the directions, or to serving diagnostic purposes with the use of appropriate distractors.

Writing skill specifications for this project required the full-time, eight-hour daily effort of four well trained professional staff members for approximately two months. However, this kind of effort is essential when the results of a project may be used in determining students' entry into and exit from the bilingual classroom.

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ASSESSING ENGLISH LITERACY SKILLS: WRITING

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SOUTHWEST REGIONAL LABORATORY
EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
PROFICIENCY VERIFICATION SYSTEM
SORT PROCEDURE FOR LANGUAGE ARTS
PAGE 32

PROGRAM: 4, GRADE: 6

SKILL: 62 PRONOUNS

PAGE:	PAGE CONTENTS:
12	INTERROGATIVE PRONOUN* READ/STUDY* INFORMATION* ON WH- QUESTIONS
13	INTERROGATIVE PRONOUN* READ/STUDY* INFORMATION* AS SUBJECTS
14	INTERROGATIVE PRONOUN* READ/STUDY* INFORMATION* ON 'WHAT' & 'WHICH'
88	DEMONSTRATIVE* READ/STUDY* RULE(S)/DEFINITION(S)* AS DETERMINER
89	DEMONSTRATIVE* INDEFINITE FORM* CHECK/IDENTIFY* LIST* AS DETERMINER
89	INDEFINITE FORM* READ/STUDY* RULE(S)/DEFINITION(S)* AS DETERMINER
90	DEMONSTRATIVE* INDEFINITE FORM* WRITE* SENTENCES FOR SPECIFIC INFORMATION/ITEMS* AS DETERMINER
96	PERSONAL PRONOUN* READ/STUDY* FORM(S)
96	AS SUBSTITUTE* READ/STUDY* SENTENCES FOR SPECIFIC INFORMATION/ITEMS
96	PERSONAL PRONOUN* AS SUBSTITUTE* READ/STUDY* RULE(S)/DEFINITION(S)
97	PERSONAL PRONOUN* AS SUBSTITUTE* CHECK/IDENTIFY* WRITE* REFERENT
97	PERSONAL PRONOUN* AS SUBSTITUTE* SUBSTITUTE* FORM(S)* IN SENTENCES
98	PERSONAL PRONOUN* READ/STUDY* RULE(S)/DEFINITION(S)* OF FIRST, SECOND, THIRD PERSON
98	GENDER* PERSONAL PRONOUN* READ/STUDY* RULE(S)/DEFINITION(S)
99	SINGULAR/PLURAL* READ/STUDY* RULE(S)/DEFINITION(S)
99	SINGULAR/PLURAL* READ/STUDY* FORM(S)
100	POSSESSIVE PRONOUN* READ/STUDY* RULE(S)/DEFINITION(S)* INCLUDING FUNCTION AS DETERM
100	POSSESSIVE PRONOUN* READ/STUDY* INFORMATION
101	PERSONAL PRONOUN* LABEL* FORM(S)* AS FIRST, SECOND, THIRD PERSON
101	SINGULAR/PLURAL* LABEL* FORM(S)
101	POSSESSIVE PRONOUN* FILL IN* CORRECT MEANING/EXAMPLE/FORM
102	NOMINATIVE* OBJECTIVE* READ/STUDY* RULE(S)/DEFINITION(S)
102	NOMINATIVE* OBJECTIVE* READ/STUDY* EXAMPLE(S)
102	NOMINATIVE* OBJECTIVE* READ/STUDY* FORM(S)
103	NOMINATIVE* READ/STUDY* SENTENCES FOR SPECIFIC INFORMATION/ITEMS* COMPOUND SUBJECTS
104	NOMINATIVE* CHOOSE/DISCRIMINATE BETWEEN/AMONG* CORRECT MEANING/EXAMPLE/FORM
104	NOMINATIVE* READ/STUDY* RULE(S)/DEFINITION(S)* FOR COMPOUND SUBJECTS
105	OBJECTIVE* READ/STUDY* SENTENCES FOR SPECIFIC INFORMATION/ITEMS* AFTER PREPOSITION
105	OBJECTIVE* READ/STUDY* RULE(S)/DEFINITION(S)* FOR COMPOUND OBJECT OF PREPOSITION
106	NOMINATIVE* OBJECTIVE* WRITE* SENTENCES FOR SPECIFIC INFORMATION/ITEMS
106	NOMINATIVE* OBJECTIVE* SAY/RECITE/ANSWER* SENTENCE(S)/LINES* ORALLY
106	NOMINATIVE* OBJECTIVE* FILL IN* CORRECT MEANING/EXAMPLE/FORM
106	OBJECTIVE* READ/STUDY* RULE(S)/DEFINITION(S)* FOR COMPOUND DIRECT OBJECTS
107	NOMINATIVE* OBJECTIVE* CHOOSE/DISCRIMINATE BETWEEN/AMONG* CORRECT MEANING/EXAMPLE/F
107	NOMINATIVE* READ/STUDY* EXAMPLE(S)* AFTER 'BE'
107	NOMINATIVE* READ/STUDY* RULE(S)/DEFINITION(S)* AFTER 'BE'
111	* NOMINATIVE* OBJECTIVE* CHOOSE/DISCRIMINATE BETWEEN/AMONG* CORRECT MEANING/EXAMPLE/F

VARIATION OF GRADE-LEVEL DESIGNATION

	Grade Level for Assessment					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Punctuation						
Uses period to end a declarative sentence.	A	G,X				
Uses question mark to end an interrogative sentence.		A,G, X				
Uses exclamation point to end an exclamatory sentence.			G	X,A		
Uses period at the end of abbreviations.		G	A	X		
Uses comma after direct address.				G	X	A
Uses apostrophe in contractions.		G	A		X	
Sentence Patterns						
Uses NV pattern.	A		G,X			
Uses NVN pattern.		A		X	G	

Note:

A = Authorities' listing in Golub's (1971) survey*

G = Golub's (1971) grade-level listing by modal appearance in 1-4 (1966) textbook series

X = Listing from SWRL data by grade level at which most or all textbooks present or have presented the skill

*Golub, L. S., and others. Present and proposed needs, objectives, and components of a language learning program. ERIC Reproduction Service Number ED 058 223, 1971.

SAMPLE OF CRITICAL SKILLS AND GRADE LEVELS OF SKILLS ACROSS STATES*

SKILLS AT THE WORD/PHRASE LEVEL	GRADE LEVEL FOR ASSESSMENT					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
SPELLING						
Suffixes						
1. Spells plurals of nouns by adding -s.		F,G	L,O			
2. Spells plurals of nouns by adding -es.		F,G	O		L	
3. Spells verbs with -ing.	G		TX,O	L		
4. Spells past tense forms of verbs with -ed suffix.	G		O			L
5. Spells new words by adding derivational suffixes.					G	TN,G
Suffixation Processes						
1. Changes y to i when adding suffixes.			G			
2. Drops final e when adding suffixes.				O		,TX
3. Doubles the final consonant when adding suffixes.				O	G	TX

NOTE: F = Florida
O = Oklahoma
G = Georgia
TN = Tennessee
L = Louisiana
TX = Texas
M = Michigan

*Lawlor, J. State competencies for Writing: Grades K-6 (Technical Note No. 3-79-07). Los Alamitos, California: SWRL Educational Research and Development, 1979.

ONE PAGE OF WRITING SKILLS FRAMEWORK

GENERAL DISCOURSE (GD)	Grade Level for Assessment					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Planning/Organizing (po)						
1000. Selects an appropriate topic when given a general subject.				X		
2000. Writes notes on a topic.						X
3000. Constructs a topic outline.						X
4000. Uses chronological order.		X				
5000. Uses logical order:						
5100. procedural order.				X		
5200. order of importance.					X	
5300. comparison/contrast order.						X
6000. Uses spatial order.					X	
7000. Uses beginning, body, and end paragraphs.						X
8000. Uses narrative organization: Combines beginning, middle, and ending of a story.			X			
Elaborating (e)						
1000. General elaborating:						
1100. Elaborates paragraphs:						
1110. Adds details to a paragraph.			X			
1120. Limits a paragraph to one main idea.				X		
1130. Constructs introductory/ beginning sentence for a paragraph.				X		
1140. Uses a topic sentence for a paragraph.					X	
1150. Uses supporting statements for a topic sentence.					X	

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INAPPROPRIATE ITEMS FOR ASSESSING WRITING SKILLS

1. Skill Statement

Uses apostrophe in singular possessive forms. [Grade 4]

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which word is right?

Betsy has a pet bird. She wants to clean the _____ cage.

A. birds'

B. birds

(C.) bird's

2. Skill Statement

Recognizes correct word order: subject-verb-object. [Grade 2]

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which is a good sentence that tells about the picture?

[picture: girl running after a boy]

(A.) Mary is chasing John.

B. Mary John is chasing.

C. John is chasing Mary.

3. Skill Statement

Uses exclamation point to end an exclamatory sentence. [Grade 4]

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which is the best mark to use in the blank?

"The barn is on fire__" Jan shouted.

A. ,

(B.) !

C. ?

D. .

4. Skill Statement

Spells vowel-r pattern: /er/-are, /er/-ear. [Grade 4]

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which letter or letters finish the word?

[picture: bear]

b_____

A. air

(B.) ear

C. are

D. er

5. Skill Statement

Distinguishes noun forms: singular/plural. [Grade 3]

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which word means more than one?

A. glass

B. sleep

C. house

(D) sheep

6. Skill Statement

Identifies words that rhyme. [Grade 2]

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which word rhymes with the name of the picture?

[picture: nine]

A. fire

B. five

(C) fine

7. Skill Statement

Limits a paragraph to one main idea. [Grade 4]

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which sentence tells the main idea of the paragraph?

Football players must be strong to play in a game. They must be able to knock other players down. Players must be able to run fast. Fast runners can carry the ball to make points in the game.

(A) It takes strength to play football.

B. Running is an important part of football.

C. Football is a fun game that everyone should play.

D. Scoring points is important.

8. Skill Statement

Uses dialogue for only one speaker in a paragraph. [Grade 5]

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which conversation is written correctly?

(A) The bus returned to school in the afternoon. Linda and Ricardo got off the bus and walked toward the classroom. "Did you enjoy the trip to zoo?" Ricardo asked.

"I sure did," Linda replied. "My favorite part was the monkey house," she said, "because some of those monkeys act just like people."

Ricardo laughed and said, "Yes, you're right."

8. This item type requires too much reading. The item was revised so that the student only had to read the paragraphs once, selecting the point at which a new paragraph should begin; e.g.:

Directions: Read this story part. Where should a new paragraph begin?

The bus returned to school in the afternoon. (A) Linda and Ricardo got off the bus and walked toward the classroom. (B) "Did you enjoy the trip to the zoo?" Ricardo asked. (C) Linda replied, "I sure did." (D) "My favorite part was the monkey house because some of those monkeys act just like people."

9. This item has two problems: (1) the directions are not specific enough, and (2) the stimulus is inappropriate as it is written. Formal and informal language are relative to audience. Thus the directions should specify the audience. An appropriate writing situation in which a sixth grader might be required to use formal language would be a letter to someone the student had never met.

The use of gang in this sentence is unclear. If the writer is referring to a group of juvenile delinquents, then gang may be a more formal and accurate description of the students than any of the answer choices. This item was revised:

Directions: The underlined word is too informal for most letters. Which word should you use if you wrote the sentence in a letter to someone that you have never met?

A new bunch of students will be coming to our school.

A. gang

B. group

C. crowd

B. The bus returned to school in the afternoon. Linda and Ricardo got off the bus and walked toward the classroom. "Did you enjoy the trip to the zoo?" Ricardo asked. "I sure did," Linda replied. "My favorite part was the monkey house," she said, "because some of those monkeys act just like people." Ricardo laughed and said, "Yes, you're right."

C. The bus returned to school in the afternoon. Linda and Ricardo got off the bus and walked toward the classroom. "Did you enjoy the trip to the zoo?" Ricardo asked.

"I sure did," Linda replied. "My favorite part was the monkey house," she said, "because some of those monkeys act just like people." Ricardo laughed and said, "Yes, you're right."

9. Skill Statement

Uses appropriate formal/informal language. [Grade 6]

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: The underlined word is too informal. Which word should you use?

A new gang of students will be coming to our school.

A. bunch

(B) group

C. crowd

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NABE Pre Conference Workshop
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PROBLEMS/SOLUTIONS

1. The inclusion of distractor type A requires that the student distinguish between singular and plural possessive forms at this grade level. However, we identified the use of the apostrophe in plural possessives as a fifth-grade skill. Consequently, distractor A was revised so that the apostrophe preceded its correct position in the word (e.g., bir'ds).

2. Distractor C is grammatical and plausible. Thus the assessment emphasis is on the correct interpretation of the picture stimulus, rather than recognition of word order. However, the items should not place undue emphasis on the student's ability to "read" pictures. Therefore, we decided that distractor type C should clearly be implausible or the picture should be changed.

3. The dialogue quotation is used as the stimulus in this item so that the exclamatory nature of the sentence can be suggested by the speaker tag. However, if the tag follows the quotation, the item actually assesses punctuation of dialogue quotations rather than terminal punctuation. Consequently, we specified that the speaker tag should precede the quotation in these items; e.g.:

   Jan shouted, "The barn is on fire__"

4. The problem here is that distractor C is inappropriate. This distractor forms the word bare, a homophone for the correct spelling. While the spelling of homophones is an important skill in and of itself, homophones should be assessed separately and should not be used as distractors in other spelling skills. Distractor C was revised to ere.

5. The correct response (choice D) requires additional context to establish its number. We decided to delete plural nouns that retain the same form as the singular (e.g., sheep, fish, deer) from this assessment.

6. As written, this item does not measure ability to discriminate rhyming words, but ability to discriminate final consonants. In order to match rhyming words, students must recognize that both the medial sound and the final sound are the same. Thus one distractor should have the same vowel sound as the target word but a different final consonant; the other distractor should have a different vowel sound, but the same final consonant. Distractor B was revised to fun.

7. This item assesses a reading rather than a writing skill--reading for the main idea. When students write, they don't construct a main idea after the paragraph. Rather, the writing problem is having a main idea and keeping to it.

Directions: One sentence can be added to the paragraph because it fits the idea of the paragraph. Which sentence is it?

Football players must be strong to play in a game. They must be able to knock other players down. Players must be able to run fast because fast runners can carry the ball to make points in the game.

A. Football players have to throw the ball hard.

B. Football players wear shirts with numbers on them.

C. Some football players go to school to learn to play ball.

D. Basketball players run fast.